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Abstract

Nitrogen-doped crumpled graphene (NCG) is successfully synthesized via vapor phase deposition of polypyrrole onto graphene aerogel followed by thermal treatment. The NCG was explored as an electrocatalyst for the oxygen reduction reaction, showing comparable electrocatalytic performance with the commercial Pt/C in alkaline membrane exchange fuel cells because of the well-regulated nitrogen doping and the robust micro-3D crumpled porous nanostructure.

Keywords

reduction, oxygen, efficient, aerogel, ppy, deposition, phase, vapor, derived, graphene, crumpled, doped, electrocatalyst, n, reaction

Disciplines

Engineering | Physical Sciences and Mathematics

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N-Doped Crumpled Graphene Derived from Vapor Phase Deposition of PPy on Graphene Aerogel as an Efficient Oxygen Reduction Reaction Electrocatalyst

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ABSTRACT

Nitrogen doped crumpled graphene (NCG) is successfully synthesized via vapor phase deposition of polypyrrole onto graphene aerogel followed by thermal treatment. The NCG was explored as an electrocatalyst for the oxygen reduction reaction, showing comparable electrocatalytic performance with the commercial Pt/C in alkaline membrane exchange fuel cells owing to the well-regulated nitrogen doping and the robust micro-3D crumpled porous nanostructure.

KEYWORDS

nitrogen doped graphene, vapor phase polymerization, oxygen reduction reaction, alkaline membrane fuel cell

The oxygen reduction reaction (ORR) is recognized as a kinetically limited step in fuel cells and metal-air batteries due to its sluggish reaction mechanism.^{1, 2} Currently, platinum (Pt) is the commonly used electrocatalysts for the ORR, however the high cost, susceptibility to fuel crossover and poor stability have impeded its large-scale commercialization.^{2, 3} Recent studies in the heteroatoms (nitrogen,^{1, 4} boron,^{5, 6} sulfur,^{1, 4, 7} phosphorus,⁸ etc.) doped graphene suggest the doped graphene could potentially be used as metal-free, anti-poison and durable electrocatalysts to replace the high-cost Pt for the ORR. Chemically converted graphene⁹, owing to its ease of preparation and processing, has been extensively used for doping through various synthetic procedures, such as thermal annealing with nitrogen containing precursors^{1, 4, 6, 10}, hydrothermal reactions^{7, 11, 12} or nitrogen plasma treatment.¹³ As a result of the doping, the spin density and charge distribution on carbon are altered, which could effectively improve the chemical and electronic properties over those of pristine graphene sheets thus enhancing the electrocatalytic performance for the ORR.^{1, 6, 12, 14} Chemically derived graphene sheets are vulnerable to stacking and aggregation, however, during reduction or drying processes due to the strong van der Waals and hydrogen bonding between water molecular and graphene sheets¹⁵. This irreversible stacking could decrease the specific surface area, cause the losses of active sites, and further hamper uniform doping, thereby compromising the overall properties of the electrocatalysts.^{10, 15}

In light of this, the design and preparation of three-dimensional (3D) porous doped graphene structures has become a key process in further widening the application of graphene for practical electrochemical devices. This is because the resultant 3D porous nanostructures could largely prevent the flat sheets from aggregating and restacking, giving them large surface areas and ample active sites for electrocatalytic reactions.^{10, 15, 16} Despite many notable achievements in fabricating 3D porous doped graphene nanostructures,^{1, 7, 11, 16} there are still certain issues that need to be

addressed, ranging from the complexity of the synthetic procedures to the post-treatment process. For example, structural template or interlayer spacer, such as silica nanoparticles, were usually employed to inhibit graphene sheets from stacking in preparing doped porous graphene structures, however the additional cost and complexity of the template removal process has limited the feasibilities of these methods in practical production.^{1, 17} Recently, graphene hydrogel (GH) and graphene aerogel (GA, dehydrated GH), synthesized through a feasible self-assembly hydrothermal method, has been recognized a novel class of 3D macroporous graphene architectures,¹⁵ and the hydrothermal doping during the formation of GH has been proposed as a feasible strategy for synthesis of 3D porous doped graphene structures,⁷ while the nitrogen configuration, which is crucial in determining catalyst performance, is beyond control.^{7, 12} Moreover, the resultant doped 3D monolithic graphene aerogels would be inevitably re-dispersed in post-treatment process for the preparation of oxygen reduction electrodes or membrane electrode assemblies (MEAs) of fuel cells or metal-air batteries, at which time the 3D monolithic porous structures would usually be demolished and the dispersed flat sheets would easily aggregate when they were dried, which would again minimizing the specific surface areas and mass transfer channels of the electrocatalyst thus decreasing the ORR performance.

In this report, we demonstrate the nitrogen-doped crumpled graphene (NCG) could be produced using GH as a starting material through the following steps: i) vapor phase deposition of polypyrrole (PPy) film on the sheets of GA (PPy-GA), and ii) introduction of the nitrogen species into graphene lattice *via* thermal annealing of the resultant PPy-GA to produce NCG. Vapor phase polymerization (VPP) is a well-established method in our group to produce inherently conducting polymer films with high conductivities and uniformity at the nanoscale on certain substrates.¹⁸ The uniform PPy coating could work as

interlayer spacer to effectively inhibit graphene sheets from stacking during the drying process and heat treatment, and could be simultaneously removed during doping process. In addition, uniform doped crumpled graphene architecture could be produced in the preparation process and this porous structure could be well maintained during post-treatment process, which makes this NCG as promising electrocatalysts for ORR. The electrocatalytic performance towards ORR of the NCG was carefully examined in alkaline medium, where it showed comparable electrocatalytic activity with Pt/C (10 wt.% Pt on Vulcan XC-72, E-Tek), but with better methanol tolerance and longer durability. Finally, we conduct anion exchange membrane fuel cell (AEMFC) tests to determine the real performance of our catalysts in a practical environment. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first AEMFC test using metal-free doped carbon materials as cathode catalysts. At the same loading level as the commercial Pt/C, our catalyst shows a maximum power output of 63 mW cm^{-2} , reaching 83% of the maximum power density of E-Tek Pt/C (76 mW cm^{-2}) suggesting its comparable performance with the Pt/C in practical environment. These results would provide important information on the real performance of metal-free catalysts and therefore benefit research on metal-free electrocatalysts for the ORR.

The preparation process for NCG is illustrated in Figure 1(a). The iron (III) p-toluenesulfonate (FeToS) was chosen as oxidizing agent for VPP growth of PPy owing to its unique advantage in producing uniform oxidant layer without crystallization compared with other inorganic iron salts.^{18, 19} In a typical synthesis, GH was first produced and then submerged in ethanol (where the GH was converted into graphene alcogel) and FeToS butanol solution subsequently to allow exchange with the FeToS butanol solution into the resultant graphene alcogel. In the following step, the obtained FeToS butanol/graphene alcogel was directly annealed at 100°C in order to

quickly evaporate the butanol solvent without forming any crystallization and consequently a uniform FeToS oxidant layer would be generated onto the surface of graphene sheets. VPP was then carried out to grow PPy films on the aerogel (PPy-GA) by transferring the FeToS film-coated graphene alcogel into a VPP deposition chamber (Figure S1) saturated with pyrrole monomer vapor and left for 1 hour. After VPP, the PPy coated graphene alcogel was washed with ethanol and water, and dried under ambient environment. During the drying process, the PPy-GA would be shrunk owing to the capillary force between the solvents and graphene sheets and as a result the crumpled sheets could be produced (Figure S2 inserts). At last, the PPy-GA was annealed at a set of temperatures to convert into the NCG, at this step the coated PPy would be eventually decomposed providing nitrogen source incorporating into the graphene lattice.

The morphology and structural transformation associated with the fabrication process between the pure GA, PPy-GA, and NCG were studied by scanning electron microscopy (SEM), as shown in Figure 1(b)-(d). Compared with the GA (Figure 1(b) and S2), the pore sizes of the PPy-GA have become much smaller and the sheets are more wrinkled, which possibly arises from the shrinkage of the gel during solvent evaporation. More obviously, it can be seen that the graphene sheets become thicker and lose transparency indicating the successful deposition of PPy, which was very uniform across all the sheets (Figure S2). Fourier transform infrared spectroscopy (FTIR, Figure S3a) and Raman spectroscopy, were firstly carried out showing the existence of PPy on GA with characteristic peaks of PPy clearly being identified in both spectrums. The nitrogen content was about 5.9 at.% (atomic percentage, the same as below), as derived from X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS) (Figure S3c). The uniformity of the PPy coating was also investigated by transmission electron microscopy (TEM) (Figure S3d) and it can be seen that the PPy film is very

uniform across all the graphene sheets, with no obvious PPy particles were observed, suggesting that the deposition was ultrathin and uniform.

After heat treatment, the 3D porous structure was well maintained, and the sheets of the NCG featured with abundant crumpled wrinkles (Figure 1(d)). It should be noted that the nitrogen doping level and the nitrogen configuration could be well controlled by varying the annealing temperature. Generally, the nitrogen doping content is around 4 at.% decreasing with the increase of temperature, while with increasing of temperature, the components of the quaternary N and pyridinic N could be largely increased (from initial 14% to 85% in the NCG-1000, Figure S4-S5 and Table S1). It shows that the content of pyrrolic form N of total N-doped in NCG-1000 has significantly decreased from initial 85% down to 15%. This indicates most N-doped has been doped into graphene lattice, not in the pyrrolic form. Combined with the results that the NCG annealed at 1000°C, denoted as NCG-1000, showed the most positive onset potential and highest current density, which indicated the best electrocatalytic performance toward the ORR (Figure S6), it is reasonable to believe that the quaternary N and pyridinic N, rather than the pyrrolic N, serve as catalytically active sites for the ORR, which is in good accordance with previous reports.¹⁷ In this report, NCG-1000 was chosen for further characterisation unless otherwise specified. Pure GA without the VPP process annealed at 1000 °C, denoted as GA-1000 and GA with a commonly used nitrogen source-urea annealed at 1000 °C, denoted as NGA-1000 (N content is 3.8%, Figure S7, see supporting information for detailed preparation process) was produced as control experiments to investigate the structural differences due to the VPP process and study the impacts on electrochemical properties due to different nitrogen doping methods.

It's worthwhile to note that all of the three carbon electrocatalysts (GA-1000, NGA-1000 and NCG-1000) maintained with porous 3D structure after heat treatment (Figure S8(a)-(c)), however,

for practicable applications, electrocatalysts need to be dispersed *via* sonication in order to apply these electrocatalysts on membrane electrodes or other electrodes. After sonication and deposition, the NCG-1000, with most of the sheets were crumpled, still exhibits a highly porous structure (Figure S8(d)). In contrast, the 3D and porous macrostructure of the GA-1000 and NGA-1000 were mostly demolished, and the majority of the sheets were flat and stacked on the membrane electrode during the electrode preparation process (Figure S8(e)-(f)). These observations clearly suggest that the synthesized NCG-1000, manifest unique robust crumpled micro-3D nanostructure and this robust porous feature could be well maintained during post-processing. Therefore it is expected that the NCG-1000 would be an ideal candidate for the ORR because of the ample O₂ and ion transfer channels, as well as the greater number of active sites on the ORR electrodes and this was later proven by the following electrochemical tests.

The detailed morphologies of the NCG-1000 was initially studied *via* SEM, confirming a micro-3D structure composed with crumpled folded graphene sheets was produced in the NCG-1000 (Figure 2(a)). TEM further displays that the porous structure of NCG-1000 is constructed with numerous curves and wrinkles (Figure 2(b)) and these wrinkled features were also investigated by high resolution TEM (HRTEM) as shown in Figure 2(c). Typical graphite crystalline structure could be seen on the sheets edges, indicating that the sheets in the NCG-1000 were somewhat stacked during the formation of GA and the heat treatments, while on the wrinkles, no visible graphite crystalline structures could be detected, implying these wrinkles were caused by crumpling of graphene sheets rather than stacking of graphene.^{11, 18} Figure 2(d) shows a scanning transmission electron microscope (STEM) image of NCG-1000, which again confirms the presence of porous 3D crumpled sheets, as discussed above. The uniformity of nitrogen doping was evidenced by energy-dispersive X-ray spectroscopy (EDS) mapping analysis, as is shown in

Figure 2(e)-(f). Homogenous nitrogen doping was realized, as is clear from the element mapping, suggesting the effectiveness of this method in producing uniform doping. The nature of the doping was further studied by XPS, showing that about 4 at.% nitrogen is incorporated into the graphene lattice (Figure 2g). The high-resolution C 1s peak could be fitted into several spectral peaks: C-C at 284.8 eV, C-O at 285.9 eV, C=O or C-N at 287.1 eV, and C-C=O at 289.0 eV (Figure 2(h)). Compared with the GA-1000, the peak area at 287.1 eV of NCG-1000 was increased, indicating that the nitrogen was doped into the graphene lattice (Figure S9).¹⁵ The nitrogen configuration was investigated from the high-resolution N 1s spectrum (Figure 2(i)), which could be fitted to three peaks of pyridinic N (398.5 eV), pyrrolic N (399.8 eV) and quaternary N (401.5 eV).^{3, 11} Compared with the nitrogen configurations in PPy-GA, nitrogen atoms were rearranged through heat treatment from pyrrolic N to quaternary N and pyridinic N, possibly because the pyrrolic N was not stable at high temperature.¹⁷ Such a rearrangement is beneficial for the electrocatalysts as the quaternary and pyridinic N are more active in catalysing the ORR than the pyrrolic N, as aforementioned. Raman spectroscopy further confirmed the incorporation of nitrogen into the graphene lattice (Figure S10). For instance the up-shifted D band as well as the increase in the intensity ratio of the D to the G peak (I_D/I_G) of NCG-1000, compared with the GA and GA-1000, suggest that the structural disorder was increased which was ascribed to the doping of nitrogen into the graphene sheets.^{6, 11}

Cyclic voltammetry (CV) curves were obtained and used for a preliminary study of the electrocatalytic oxygen reduction properties of the synthesized electrocatalysts (Figure 3(a)). As shown in Figure 3(a), a quasi-rectangular featureless voltammetric current within the potential range between -0.9V and 0.1V was observed for NCG-1000 in N₂-saturated solution, which corresponds to a result of the typical supercapacitance effect on porous carbon materials.^{6, 16} In

contrast, when O₂ saturated electrolyte was used, a well-defined ORR peak centered at -0.31 V with a current density of -2.9 mA cm⁻², was detected, and the onset potential (the potential at which oxygen reduction commences) was at about -0.05 V, which was comparable with that of the Pt/C (-0.01 V) and significantly higher than those of the GA-1000 (-0.13 V) and the PPy-GA (-0.21 V), indicating that the nitrogen doping could effectively enhance the ORR performance (Figure S11). In comparison with the NGA-1000 electrode which showed an onset potential of -0.12 V, the higher onset potential of the NCG-1000 suggested the dominant role of the nitrogen configuration, as well as the porous structures on the electrocatalytic performance of the electrocatalysts, which also indicated the advantages of this method in producing well-controlled nitrogen doped crumpled graphene over the conventional protocols.

To gain insight into the ORR activities and kinetics of the electrocatalysts, steady state ORR polarization curves of the E-Tek Pt/C, PPy-GA, GA-1000, NGA-1000 and NCG-1000 electrocatalysts were recorded respectively (Figure 3(b)). The curves on GA-1000 and PPy-GA showed a slow current increase and no current plateau, revealing their poor performance towards the ORR.^{6, 20} In contrast, a well-defined diffusion-limiting current region from -0.6 V to -0.35 V and a mixed kinetic-diffusion control region from -0.08 V to -0.35 V were observed on the NCG-1000, which is very similar to the behavior of the Pt/C, indicating its comparable activity toward the ORR compared with the commercial Pt/C. As a comparison, the NGA-1000 displayed a similar plateau but with a much lower diffusion limiting current density, owing to limited active sites exposing at the reaction zone between the bulk electrode and electrolyte and the lack of sufficient ion and mass transfer channels on the electrodes. To identify the ORR activity of the electrocatalysts, the half-wave potential ($E_{1/2}$), at which the current is a half of the limiting current, was calculated. For the NCG-1000, the $E_{1/2}$ is -0.223 V, which is about 30mV lower than that of

Pt/C (-0.193V) and much more positive than those of GA-1000 (-0.295V) and PPy-GA (-0.351V). The above comparisons clearly indicate that the crumpled porous NCG-1000 manifested significant improvement in electro-catalyzing O_2 in an alkaline medium compared with NGA-1000, suggesting that this doping method could effectively increase the electrocatalytic performance of the catalysts, which may be ascribed to the well maintained porous structure during the post treatment process.

In order to obtain the kinetics of the ORR, steady state ORR polarization curves were also collected at various rotation speeds, and corresponding Koutecky-Levich (K-L) plots were drafted from the ORR polarization curves. Figure 3(c) shows the K-L plots of various samples at -0.5V (vs. Ag/AgCl) and the plots of all the samples show good linearity. Noticeably, the NCG-1000 showed a much higher ORR current, which is close to that of the commercial Pt/C and significantly higher than those of GA-1000, PPy-GA, and NGA-1000 at all rotation speeds, which is a further indication of the outstanding ORR catalytic performance on the crumpled doped graphene electrodes as compared with other three carbon materials. The electron-transfer numbers (n) and the kinetic limiting current (J_k) of all the samples at -0.5V (vs. Ag/AgCl) were calculated according to the slopes of the linear fitted K-L plots on the basis of the K-L equation (Figure 3(c)-(d)). The NCG-1000 exhibited much higher electron transfer efficiency as well as the kinetic limiting current over the GA-1000, PPy-GA, and NGA-1000. In comparison with the E-Tek Pt/C, the J_k for the NCG-1000 was even much higher than that of the Pt/C and was comparable to or even higher than most of recently reported doped graphene electrodes (Table S2), suggesting the unique superiority of this method for producing high efficient metal-free electrocatalyst for the ORR by controllably varying the nitrogen configuration and the generation of enduring porous structure.

The fuel tolerance of the cathode catalysts is critical in the real application for fuel cells, because the relatively small methanol or other fuel molecular, such as methanol would cross through the membrane and react with the catalysts in the cathodes which will cause mixed potentials and thus reducing the cell efficiency.^{1, 6, 21} To this end, the selectivity of NCG-1000, NGA-1000 and commercial Pt/C were compared through chronoamperometric measurements at the rotation speed of 1600 rpm at -0.3 V (*vs.* Ag/AgCl) with the subsequent introduction of oxygen and methanol, as displayed in Figure 4(a). The introduction of oxygen led to a significant increase in the current density, and a stable current was attained for the three catalysts, revealing that their ORR performance were comparative. After the addition of methanol, however, a distinct change on current was observed for the Pt/C catalyst, indicating that methanol oxidation had occurred, i.e., the selectivity of the Pt/C was poor. In contrast, for the NGA-1000 and NCG-1000, the current remained nearly unchanged after the addition of methanol, reflecting their superior selectivity and better methanol tolerance owing to the nature of nitrogen doped carbon materials. The durability of these catalysts was also assessed by the chronoamperometric technique at -0.3 V (*vs.* Ag/AgCl) (Figure 4(b)).^{1, 6} During the long term testing (up to 15000 s), a similar current loss was observed for the NCG-1000 and NGA-1000 suggesting their durability were almost the same, whereas for the commercial Pt/C, a dramatic current loss was observed, indicating that the NCG-1000 had superior advantages over the commercial Pt/C when used as long-term running electrocatalysts.

The AEMFC tests were finally conducted in order to obtain the real performance of the catalysts in a practical environment. To the best of our knowledge, the testing of metal-free nitrogen doped materials in a real anion membrane single cell has rarely been reported, possibly because of the lack of an anion exchange membrane and anion exchange ionomer and the relatively poor ORR activities of the non-metal carbon electrocatalysts compared with the metal-nitrogen-carbon

electrocatalysts^{22, 23} or noble metal catalysts.²⁴ The morphologies of the NCG-1000 catalyst layers on GDL were shown in Figure 4(c), displaying that the microporous structure of NCG-1000 is well kept on the GDL. However, in contrast, the porous structure of NGA-1000 was mostly demolished and most sheets were relatively flat with some area stacking together on the GDL (Figure 4(d)). The merit of the porous structure of NCG-1000 electrode is expected to increase the capacitance and the electroactive surface area (ESA) of the electrode, which was also confirmed through the in-situ CV measurement of the two electrodes under identical conditions (Figure S12). The higher ESA and porous structure would accelerate the reaction between electroactive materials and electrocatalysts and the mass transport rate in a real AEMFC and these were further evidenced by the polarization curves of the single cell on these two catalysts, as shown in Figure 4(e). It can be seen at low current density area ($< 50 \text{ mA cm}^{-2}$), the polarization curves for the NCG-1000 and NGA-1000 are almost the same, however at the higher polarization potential, the NCG-1000 delivers a much higher current than the NGA-1000. The reason may be ascribed to the open and porous structure on the electrode, which could facilitate oxygen and ion transport, thereby enhancing the performance of the electrode. This comparison illustrated the significance of the porous structure in producing high performance ORR catalysts for real fuel cell. Further comparisons were made against the commercial E-Tek Pt/C at the same mass loading level (2 mg cm^{-2}) under identical testing conditions. At the practicable operating potential ($\sim 0.6 \text{ V}$)²⁵, the current density for the NCG-1000 was about 60 mA cm^{-2} , which is about 63% of the E-Tek Pt/C (95 mA cm^{-2}) and the maximum power density for the NCG-1000 was about 63 mW cm^{-2} , reaching 83 % of the maximum power density of E-Tek Pt/C (76 mW cm^{-2}). These comparisons clearly indicate that the power output of the NCG-1000 is comparable with that of the Pt/C, revealing that it could work as an efficient metal-free electrocatalyst under practicable working conditions.

Moreover, no virtual changes on the microstructures of the NCG-1000 catalyst layer were observed after single-cell performance test, suggesting significant robust porous structure of the NCG-1000 (Figure S13).

In summary, we have demonstrated that the uniform nitrogen doped crumpled graphene could be produced through vapor phase deposition of PPy on GA (PPy-GA) following by thermal treatment in this report. The uniform doping nature, well-regulated nitrogen configuration, and the robust micro-3D crumpled porous nanostructure, which could be well-maintained after the post processing in preparing ORR electrodes or membrane electrodes, endow the catalyst with excellent catalytic performance towards the ORR. The AEMFC tests also provide convincing evidence that these metal-free nitrogen doped carbon materials could work as comparable efficient catalysts, comparable to the Pt/C, under real operation condition thus providing further confidence for developing metal-free catalysts for the next-generation fuel cells. This work will help further understand the mechanism of nitrogen doping in ORR electrocatalytic performance and would benefit the development of conducting polymer-graphene composites and metal-free doped graphene catalysts for the applications in the electrocatalysis, energy storage devices, and energy conversion systems.

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Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interests.

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ASSOCIATED CONTENT

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Supplimentary materials include: (i) Experimental Section with detail information on materials preparation, characterization, and device assembly and investigation; (ii) Supplementary Figures and Tables with quality discussion which is not mentioned in main text; and (iii) References which are cited in Supporting Information. This information is available free of charge via the Internet at <http://pubs.acs.org/>.

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Figure 1

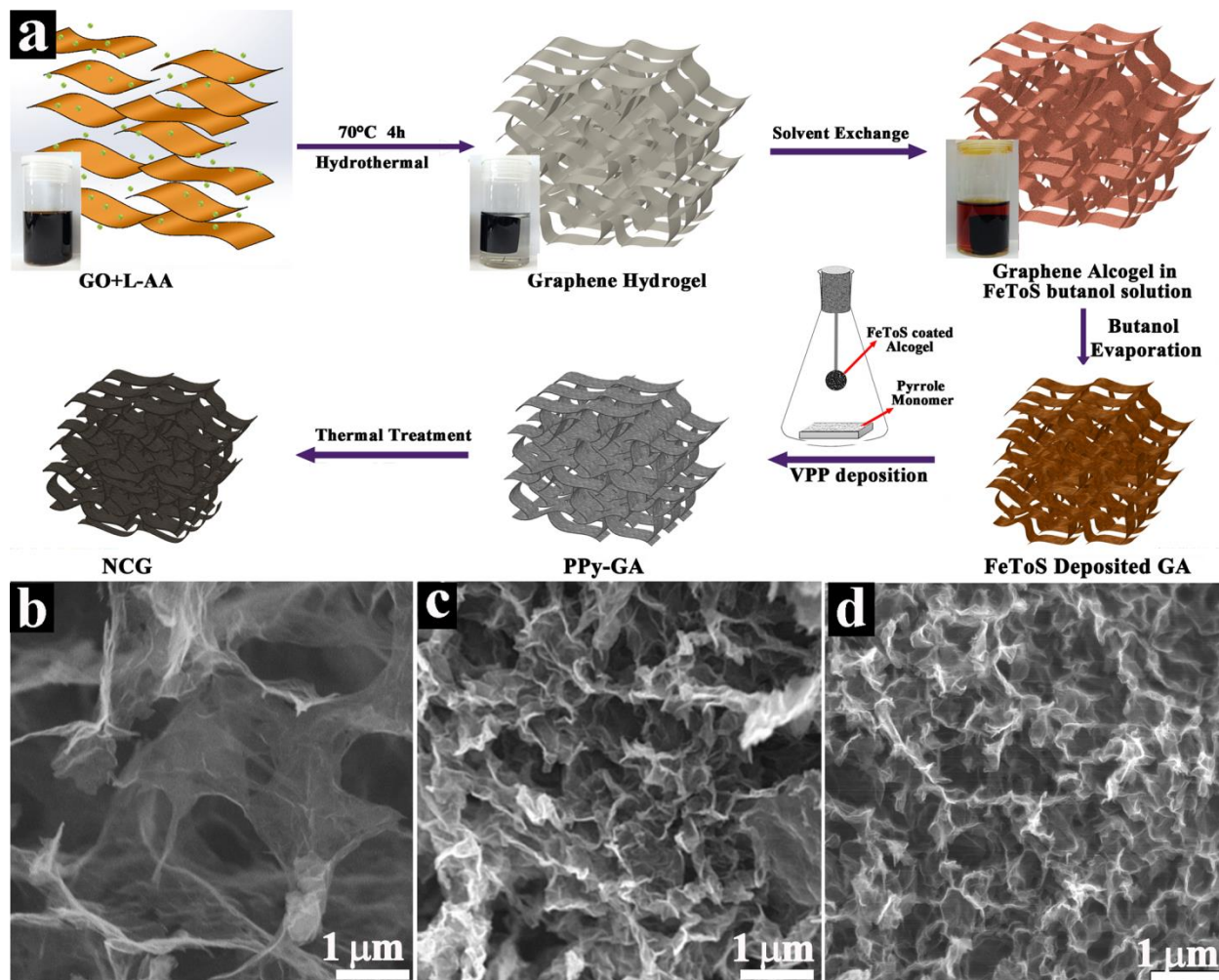


Figure 1. (a) The schematic preparation process of NCG based on a vapor phase polymerization method on graphene hydrogel. (b-d) SEM images collected during the preparation process to show a comparison between the (b) GA, (c) PPy-GA and (d) NCG-1000

Figure 2

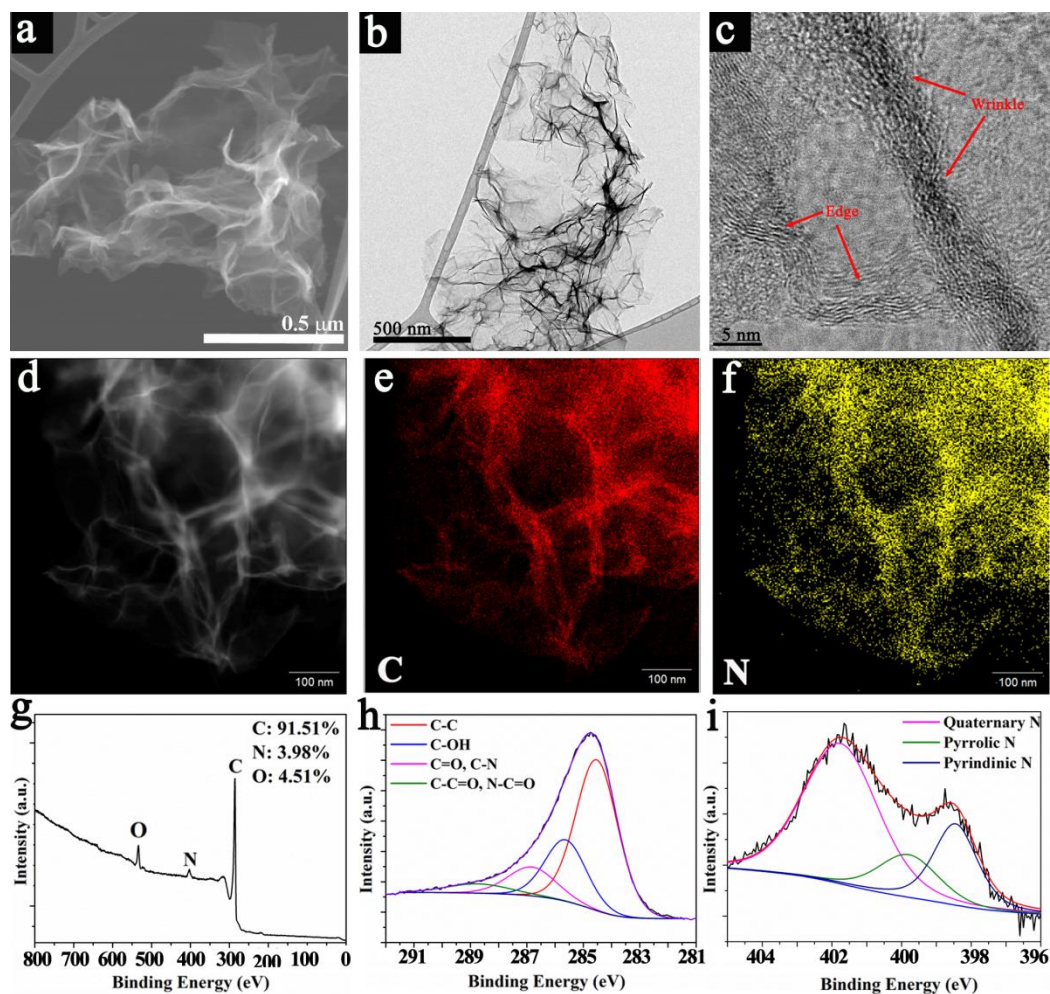


Figure 2. Characterisation of NCG-1000: (a) SEM images, (b) TEM images, (c) HR-TEM images, (d) scanning transmission electron microscope (STEM), (e-f) EDS elemental mapping analysis of (d): (e) carbon, (f) nitrogen. (g-i) XPS analysis: (g) survey spectrum. (h-i) corresponding high-resolution XPS spectra of (h) C1s and (i) N1s.

Figure 3

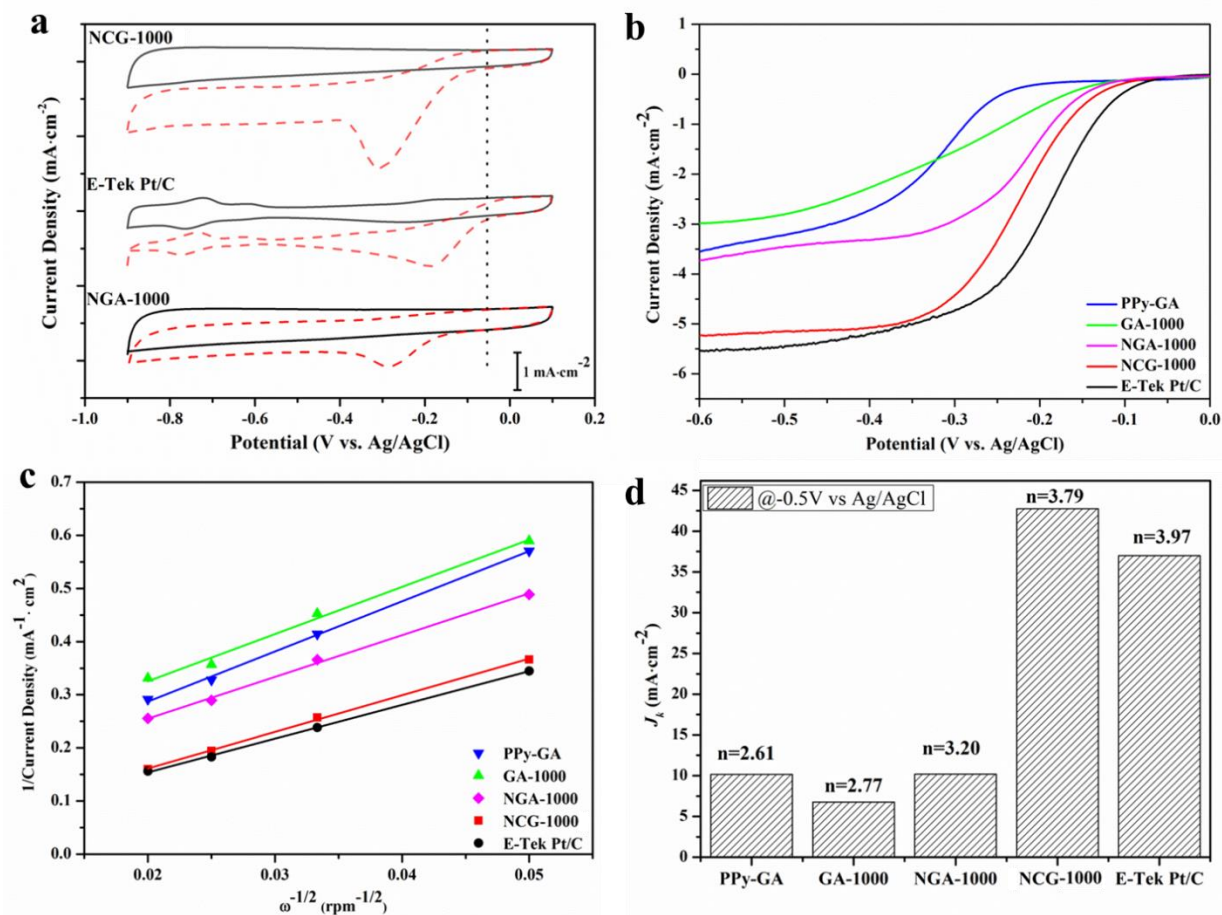


Figure 3. Comparison of the electrochemical catalytic performance of the synthesized NCG-1000, PPy-GA, GA-1000, NGA-1000 and the commercial available E-Tek Pt/C catalysts: a) CV curves of the NCG-1000, NGA-1000 and E-Tek Pt/C electrocatalysts in N_2 (solid line) and O_2 (dashed lines) saturated electrolyte with a scan rate of 50 mV s^{-1} ; the black dashed line indicates the onset potential of the NCG-1000. (b) Steady-state LSV curves at a rotating speed of 1600 rpm in O_2 saturated electrolyte. (c) Koutecky-Levich plots of the electrocatalysts at the potential of -0.5 V (vs Ag/AgCl). (d) Kinetic limiting current density (J_k) and the corresponding electron transfer number of the electrocatalysts

Figure 4

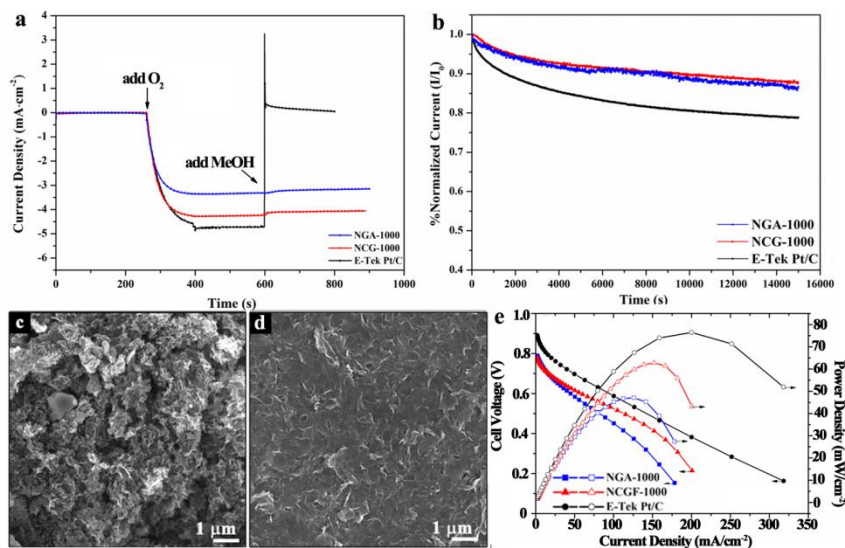


Figure 4. Chronoamperometric responses at -0.3 V (vs. Ag/AgCl) of the NGA-1000, NCG-1000 and E-Tek Pt/C at the rotation speed of 1600 rpm (a) with oxygen and methanol (1 M) added at about 250 s and 600 s respectively, (b) in O_2 saturated electrolyte up to 15000 seconds at -0.3 V (vs. Ag/AgCl). (c-d) SEM image of the catalysts layers on gas diffusion layer (GDL) with (c) NCG-1000 and (d) NGA-1000 as electrocatalysts. (e) Current density curves and power density curves of a single AEMFC test using E-Tek Pt/C, NGA-1000 and NCG-1000 as cathode catalysts

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